

you sweet talk like a cop and you know it by rillrill

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“It really does look great,” Joyce says, knocking her knee against his.
“My hero.”

“Hero? A week ago you were too proud to let me fix a hole in your wall.”

you sweet talk like a cop and you know it

Author's Note:

This came from a couple Tumblr prompts. Title is from "The Way We Get By" by Spoon.

"You don't need to do this," Joyce says, for what must be the third or fourth time already today.

Jim glances over his shoulder, abandoning his search for the studs in the wall. "Joyce," he says plaintively. "Please. It's going to be winter, you can't live in a house with a piece of plywood nailed over a two-by-three hole in the wall."

"I don't intend to," she says, bristling. "I can fix it myself. I already planned to, before you –"

"Joyce." He shakes his head, and she rolls her eyes despite herself, because she can, that's the thing: she's patched her own roof three or four times, cleaned her own gutters; she's the one who taught Jonathan how to take care of a house, because God knows Lonnie never did. Jim sighs, resting one forearm against the wall, and fixes her with a brow-furrowed look of contemplation. "Have you ever just let someone else handle a problem for you?"

"No." It comes out flat and fast and obvious, and she sees Jim stifle a laugh before shaking his head gamely.

"Didn't think so." He jerks his head at the sheetrock saw on the floor. "Do you mind handing me that saw?"

She does, again, despite herself. He takes it from her hand and starts cutting out the damaged sheetrock in long, straight, solid lines. Joyce watches with interest, stepping back, taking in all of him: his arms, his solid back, the way his shoulder blades and muscles move under his shirt. As the wind gusts in through the new, larger hole, she folds her arms over her chest and tucks her hands into the sleeves of her sweater.

Jim turns back around to set the sheetrock aside, and she quickly averts her eyes, focuses on the sheetrock. Not that it helps. The corners of his mouth curl up in a knowing, affable smile, and he bends down to find a smaller knife. The curve of his ass and thighs under his jeans – she definitely doesn't stare at that. It's not her. Not like her at all.

"As it happens, I actually enjoy this kind of work," Jim says, returning to the hole in the wall. He's scraping down the side of the hole with a smaller knife, and Joyce focuses on that, the repetitive action of it. "It's grounding. I did a lot of it when..." He trails off, and Joyce thinks that maybe she should interject, take some weight off his end of the conversation, but before she can put words together, the front door creaks open and Jonathan flies through it.

"Hey Mom, hey – oh," and here he stops, looking slightly disconcerted. "Hey, Chief."

"I'm here to help your mom fix the place up," Jim says with a little nod, and Jonathan shrugs.

"Okay," he says, and turns back to Joyce. "I'm going to Nancy's, all right? For dinner."

"Be home before ten," she says absently, and he turns on his heel and walks right out the way he came, and Joyce watches him go with a faint smile. When she turns back to Hopper, he's watching her.

She wants to say something funny, something wry and mom-like about kids and how fast they grow up, but instead she's caught on how Hop's got his teeth sunk into his lower lip and the odd softness to his gaze. Joyce clears her throat, instead, and busies herself picking up the new piece of sheetrock. "I can cut this," she says instead, and Jim clears his own throat and nods.

That's the first weekend.

She doesn't think about it much all week, focuses on work, on cooking dinner, on the whirl of activity around her. But the Saturday following, he's there again, stripping her wall of the old wallpaper despite her weak, half-baked initial demurring. He hears none of it, and after a few minutes she's thankful for the excuse to stop arguing; just rolls up her sleeves and pitches in. She doesn't want to look at this wall, with the alphabet still scrawled in her manic paint-splattered handwriting from floor to ceiling, any longer anyway.

On Saturday they strip the wall, and on Sunday they go to the hardware store for new paper. What she can afford doesn't match the old, but, she points out, that hardly matters anyway. "We don't have too many fancy dinner parties or anything."

"Me neither," Jim observes dryly. "I don't think anyone'd take either of us for entertainers." A man with a cart piled with lumber, an oversized load, careens down the aisle, and Hop places his hand on the small of her back, pulling her to the side of the aisle, safely out of the way.

Laying the new wallpaper is an all-day affair, and she's thankful the boys aren't home to get in the way; it occurs to her, halfway through, that Jonathan should learn this task, too, but there'll undoubtedly be more opportunities. When they've finished, they're both sweating, and Joyce's muscles feel wrung out from sanding the old chips and bumps out of the wall. She collapses on the couch in the middle of the room, too tired to bother pushing it back against the wall, and moves over only slightly as Jim sits down heavily next to her.

"Good work, team," he mutters, and she holds out her hand for a low-five.

"Great work."

"Mm."

"It really does look great," she says, knocking her knee against his. "My hero."

"Hero? A week ago you were too proud to let me fix a hole in your

wall –”

“I was being polite,” Joyce protests weakly, and he knocks his knee back against hers.

“Quick turnaround there, Joyce.”

“I would’ve managed on my own,” she says. “But –”

“Mm?”

“You’re not wrong, it’s nice – not to.”

“You’d be surprised,” he says, “how nice it is not to have to manage everything on your own.”

A pause. Joyce leans her head back against the back of the couch and ponders, considers her next move carefully. She feels the impulse rise within her, coiling like a snake, the desire to do something that has the potential, the beginnings, of a possible mistake. But then again: it’s only potential, until she does something about it.

She sits back up and takes a breath, glancing up at him. He’s got that soft look again, faraway and glazed-looking. She nods, and gives him a knowing smile. They’re both adults. They know what the next step is.

When he kisses her, it feels like an inevitability, something she could’ve seen coming a mile away. She kisses back, harder, deeper, grabs him by the collar of his shirt and pulls him down to her level. He smells good, despite the labor, like clean sweat and like a *man* . All man. No booze on his breath or coming out his pores today. She kisses him deeper, nips at his lips and opens her mouth, call and response.

“Mm,” he says as he pulls back a bit, and his eyelashes are so damn long this close.

“Mm?”

He doesn’t say anything, just shakes his head, looks amazed, and kisses her again.

Three months and two weeks after the start of it all, they're getting to the point where he doesn't need an excuse to drop by anymore. Joyce finds this reassuring, a complement to the quiet hum of anxiety that often buzzes along the highest frequency of her brainwaves: above all else, she's got this, the quiet, certain belief that no matter what happens, the sun will rise in the east and set in the west and Jim will always be able to find an excuse, without looking too hard, to drop by her house and see what's going on.

It's been three months and two weeks, and in that period of time his excuses have grown less and less concrete – at first he'd come over with the intention of providing some kind of service, fixing up the house, cleaning the gutters, doing whatever he could to ease the transition back into some semblance of normality. Then it was food, donuts, takeout on nights he must have known she wouldn't have had time to cook.

Now the need for excuses feels like it no longer factors in; nobody questions his presence there, least of all Joyce herself. The thing is, though, she should have learned to expect it by now. She gets a Friday off from the store, and throws herself into deep-cleaning the house, antsy and uncomfortable with the layer of grime that she never seems to be able to scrub away. Her nailbeds sting with chemicals, her hands and knees are aching once the kitchen floor starts to shine, but it's the good kind of ache, the one that comes from having accomplished something.

She's taking a breather, scrubbing the dirt from under her own fingernails and just breathing, for a moment, when there's a knock on the door.

It occurs to her, in a flash, to perhaps panic. That something else has happened, to Will, to Jonathan, to both of them. She bolts to the door and swings it open, and then flinches as soon as she sees him, trying to hide behind the door in an attempt to conceal her ratty clothes and unkempt hair. "Jesus, Hop."

“Hm?” He frowns. “Is now not a good time?”

She wipes her brow on the back of her hand, shakes her head. “You can’t just – drop by unannounced like this. I mean, it’s not –”

Jim shrugs, looking bemused. “If you’re busy, I can always come back later. I just thought, you know, slow day, not a lot going on down at the station. I thought I’d swing by.”

“And I appreciate that. Truly. Just –” And here she gestures wanly at herself. “I’m not, you know, presentable.”

This stops Jim cold. He looks her over, head to toe, oddly thorough and appreciative: “I’m not seeing a problem.”

Joyce folds her arms over her chest protectively; her sweats and t-shirt are old and embarrassing, she doesn’t have a bra on, her skin is shiny and her hair is a wretched mess. “I’ve been cleaning,” she says, explanatory. “I just didn’t expect company... that’s it.”

“You look great to me, Joyce,” he says, pinching the bridge of his nose and then rubbing his brow. “But if you’re busy, I –”

“No, no, you can come in. You want coffee?”

“Coffee sounds great.”

Flustered, still, she opens the door wider and steps back, letting him in; he watches her as she closes it behind them and follows her to the kitchen. She dumps the remains of her half-drunk coffee cup into the sink, rinses the cup and starts to pour him a fresh one. She can feel herself slouching, trying to minimize her frame. She’s very good at disappearing in plain sight.

“Hey,” he says from behind her, and she feels him take a step closer. “You look wonderful. Really.”

“You don’t have to just say that,” she mutters, not looking at him as she rifles through a drawer for a new spoon. Jim steps a little closer and runs a hand up her arm.

“I’m not,” he says, “just *saying* it.”

When she turns to look up at him, it hits her all at once, and he slides his hands down from her arms to her hips, his fingers splayed wide over the fabric of her sweats. He squeezes, kneading her flesh with a vaguely glazed look in his eye, and Joyce takes a quick, ragged breath.

“God, I’m sorry,” she says. “Lonnie just always, y’know, really didn’t like me without a little bit of effort.”

“You don’t need *effort*,” Jim laughs, and takes another step, boxing her in against the counter. She laughs a little under her breath, looking up at him, pressing her body eagerly against him as he strokes a hand over her cheek and jaw. “You’re gorgeous. Fuck Lonnie. You know how I feel about that.”

“Mm.” She looks away, briefly, but as Jim brushes his thumb over her bottom lip, she tilts her face up to be kissed, and Jim, it seems, has no choice but to kiss her.

He grabs her around the waist to sit her up on the clean kitchen counter, steps in between her legs as she wraps them around his waist, locking him in. It’s halting for just a second before he takes hold of her face with both hands, and then it’s perfect. She bites his lips, grabbing onto his wrists and threading her fingers through his hair, all of it signifying more, faster, harder. She’s getting good at learning him and how he operates, the way he feeds off her intensity and vice versa, sending shock waves down the current of spiky metallic want that runs through her. Joyce digs her nails into his scalp and then down the nape of his neck, and he drags his lips over her jaw and bites her neck and mutters into her skin, “Bedroom?”

“Yeah, yeah, we’ve got some time,” she says, and then lets out a high-pitched sound as he reaches underneath her and hoists her back off the counter, a hand on either side of her ass as he carries her toward her room, her face buried in his shoulder and her laughing through it, despite herself.

He kicks open her door and she laughs a little harder as he deposits her on the bed. He’s undoing his belt as she sprawls out backward, and she just lets it happen. Because apparently, this is the new order of things. He drops his belt on the floor and rips off his shirt and then

clammers down onto the mattress, pulling her sweats and underwear off in a single go, and it doesn't occur to her to be at all self-conscious even as he grabs at the hem of her holey old t-shirt and yanks it up over her head, leaving her bare before he dives in.

He trails his lips down her abdomen, drops kisses on her inner thighs. "Goddamn," he says, resting his face on her left thigh, beard scratchy and ticklish as he smiles faintly, still looking dazed. "Goddamn," he says again, and Joyce feels like she might crawl out of her skin, but then he drops back down with that easy, intense focus, and his mouth is perfect, rough and fast and vulnerable and incredible, the electricity in the air between them sizzling and tense. Heated and frenetic. She grabs his face, holds his head steady as she bucks against it; he keeps his left hand on her stomach as he fucks her with three solid fingers on the right; she gasps and moans and doesn't hold back even as he brings her over the edge – once, then twice, whiting out with pleasure, watching him grin up at her with a glazed look of accomplishment and pride every time she comes shuddering against his mouth and fingers.

"Jesus Christ," she says, breathing hard and fast when he lets up long enough to get his own clothes off; shucking his own pants and boxers and tossing them over the side of the bed. She scrapes her fingernails lightly over his bare chest, reaches up to suck a kiss into the flesh over his sternum.

He smirks, shivers as she nips at his skin and strokes him off, biting down hard enough on his nipple that his cock jumps in her hand. "Yeah?"

"Get down here," she demands, pulling away and chewing instead on her own lower lip as he pumps himself idly.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever the lady wants." Another deep kiss, and she's licking into his mouth hot and dirty, she can't get enough of her own taste – he's a good man, solid, giving and caring and so fucking good at this. Fucking phenomenal. When he eases inside her, filling her completely, she groans like she always does, rakes her nails down his back and grabs at his ass like she can't get him deep enough.

"Yes," she mutters, "yes, don't stop," and he doesn't respond, but

follows her lead anyway. *Faster harder more don't stop* – she reaches up and takes him by the throat on a whim, just another solid place to lay a hand, and his breath hitches as they lock eyes. She doesn't squeeze down, there's no pressure behind it, but – *Jesus*.

She's overthinking.

She *can't* overthink it.

But the trust – *Jesus*.

He trusts her, and he *cares* about her, but more than anything he *wants* her. Wants her as she is, fucks into her harder as she squeezes just a little, just a hint of pressure, of all-encompassing, mind-blistering desire. It overwhelms her, floods all her senses at once as he moans and fucks her harder, harder, giving her just as much as she wants. Her hand slips back around to the nape of his neck again, and then she's digging in her nails, his hips snapping into her again and again, arms trembling and breath shortening and finally, finally spilling inside her with a strangled groan. She breathes in deeply as he settles on top of her, takes in steadying lungfuls of coffee and cigarettes and the soap he uses, familiar, just Dial bar soap from the supermarket.

When he's back – and it takes him a minute – she's still moving against him, just a little, and he seems to have enough energy to reach down between her legs with one hand and work her through another slow, easy one. His lips against her ear, her lobe between his teeth, breathing warm and lusty against her as she shakes and comes bucking against his palm, and then, finally, stills.

"I've never seen a woman go off like you before," he observes, wrapping her in his arms and laughing as she looks away, face still flushed and dewy with sweat. "Look at me! Shit. That's a good thing. That's a fucking incredible thing."

"You're not so bad," she laughs, and drops another kiss on his sternum, up his collarbone.

He cocks a brow. "High praise."

“Shut up, it is.” She kisses him again on the neck, and again, this time on the lips. This time he holds her face steady, kisses her for a good long time. When he finally pulls away, he brushes his thumb over her lower lip again.

“I fucking love you,” Jim mutters from the side of his mouth, and then pulls away as Joyce blinks, stunned. “Shit. Was that too soon?”

She doesn't know how to answer that. She doesn't know where to begin. It's been four, five months and they're barely dating, they don't have regular nights out. The kids barely know. It's ridiculous, unlike her, rushing into this with someone just as damaged as she is. It's a dumb idea on the best days, a long-buried place she never thought she'd revisit. Intellectually, theoretically, she knows this.

She doesn't say that. What she says, instead, is: “I kind of love you too.”

He grins at her, that stupid goony closed-lip smile with his nose all scrunched up, and she laughs into his shoulder again and pulls him closer to her, closer, close enough to feel his pulse in his jugular against her lips. It's a bad idea, but one they have all the time in the world to turn good.